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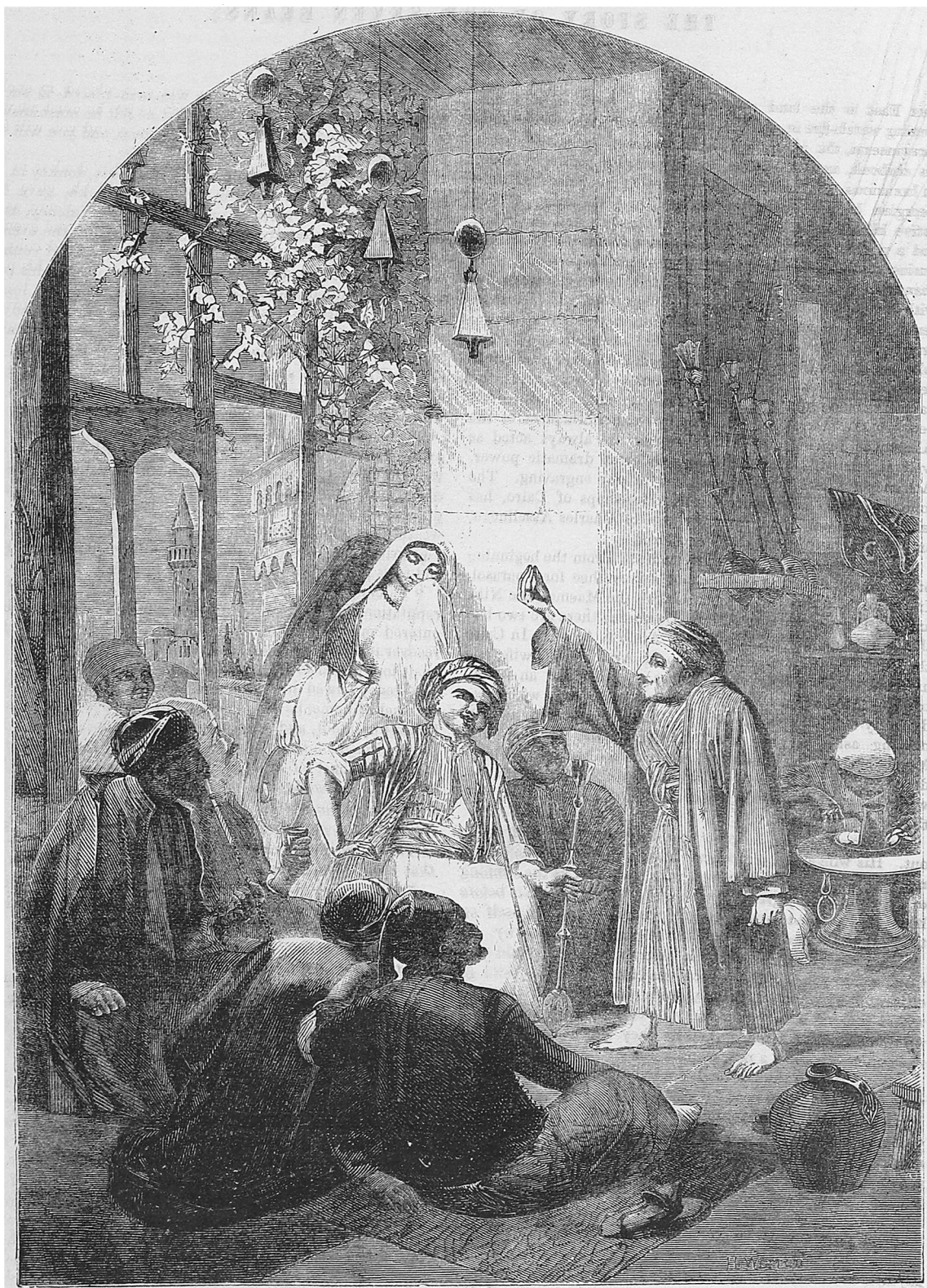
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DRAWN BY H. WARREN, ESQ., PRESIDENT OF THE NEW SOCIETY OF PAINTERS IN WATER COLOURS.

THE STORY-TELLER.

SCENE IN AN EGYPTIAN CAFE.

THE STORY OF THE SEVEN BEANS;

OR, THE TRUE TALE OF BEN LEFGOIM.

THE East is the land of stories. The Arab around the evening watch-fire in the desert, the Persian merchant in the caravanserai, the idle Turk in the coffee-shop, lying puffing his chibouk, and the sultan jaded with sensuality, lounging on luxurious cushions in the recesses of his palace, and the Georgian beauty, weary of slavery, and dreaming of her native hills—all value a good tale as the greatest of treats, and a good story-teller as the cleverest of men. When the business of the day is at an end, the shopkeepers and merchants of the town hurry to the café, and there reclining easily, with the bowls of their pipes at their feet, and all their senses buried in voluptuous dreaminess, they listen while the professional story-teller recounts the adventures of some follower of the Prophet, and his reward is never grudgingly bestowed. When his talent and fluency are very great, the payments made him are sometimes extravagant. The intervals between the stories are filled up by the performances of the *Almeh*, or dancing girls. The stories are always acted as well as related, and sometimes with great dramatic power. A scene of this kind is represented in our engraving. The following tale, as related in the coffee-shops of Cairo, has fallen under our hand, from the pen of Charles Asselineau, and we have put it into shape and form.

In the name of the Prophet, welcome! From the beginning of the world unto the end a cloud serves thee for a parasol. In Cairo there are three good things—the Maamal, the Nile, and the Feast of the Sultan. At Damascus there are two bad things—blasphemy and falsehood. Allah is Allah! In Cairo there lived not many years ago a poor Arab and his wife, and his name was Ben Lefgoim. He was a willing and an industrious man, but times were hard, money scarce, and with great difficulty did he make a living. He would sit in his hut heaping ashes on his head, crying, "God is God, and Mohammed is his prophet; but what has Mohammed ever done for me?" His wife would reproach him with his wickedness; but in vain. He continued to find fault with the decrees of Providence.

One morning Ben Lefgoim rose early and prepared to go out. His wife asked him where he was going, but he would not say. She pressed, however, very hard, and as the cunning of a woman is very great, he at last laid bare his heart before her. He had made up his mind to go out, secrete himself on the edge of the desert, and rob the first man that came by.

"Dog of an Arab!" cried she, angrily, "so you would turn thief, would you? Take a book, an inkstand, and a pen; go out into the bazaar, and sit you down gravely in a corner, but where, looking humble, you may be seen by all. The people will think you a learned sheikh; they will ask your advice, and you will become a rich man."

"But," replied the husband, dolefully, "I have not even a tarboosh to cover my head."

His wife looked round, and saw lying in a corner an empty yateney, a kind of pumpkin, which she cut in twain, and stuck on his head. This gave him a very ancient and solemn aspect. A waggish neighbour even called him as he went out Sheikh Yateney, which being translated, is Father Pumpkin. Lefgoim, however, looked not to the right or to the left, but, his book open, and inkstand in hand, moved on towards the bazaar. He looked about him, and at last saw a spot which lay near the entrance, and there fixed himself. Now it happened that about an hour later a peasant from one of the neighbouring villages came by, looking around him anxiously, and prying into every door-way. He was about to rush through the bazaar, when, seeing the solemn-looking sheikh seated on the ground, he said:—

"May thy beard never be less! but, master, I have lost my donkey. You are a learned man, can you tell me where it is?"

"Oh, Fatima!" muttered Lefgoim to himself, "you may

expect a beating for this. Never was man placed in such a wretched position by his wife." But he felt he must answer, so he said at random, "Go to the cemetery, and you will find your donkey."

Now it happened that the peasant found his donkey in the place indicated, and returning told the sheikh, gave him many thanks and a piece of money. Sheikh Yateney, as he was in future generally called, went home in the evening quite delighted, and thanked his wife for her good counsel. Next day he returned full of doubt and hesitation to his post, and was consulted almost as soon as seated about the loss of some silk. Fortune was good to him again. He gave advice, and it chanced that again it was good. And so he went on many days, and it always happened that what he said was right. Providence seemed to take a pleasure in carrying out all his predictions, and he humbled himself before Allah, and declared daily that Mohammed was really his prophet.

But bad are the calculations of man. Before a month was over, Yateney would willingly have never been born, and thought himself the most miserable man in existence. He was seated one morning in the bazaar as usual, looking out complacently for clients, his clothes no longer ragged, but still wearing his pumpkin, which was, so to speak, his sign, when four grim janissaries came up, seized him somewhat roughly, and took him before the pasha of the province.

"Yateney," said the pasha to him, "I have heard of thy reputation for wisdom. Now, last night a band of robbers entered my palace and stripped my treasure. Thou must recover it for me, and in seven days. If thou dost not, thou shalt lose thy head."

Yateney bowed his head, and went out lamenting. When he reached home he threw his pumpkin on the floor, seated himself beside it, and heaped ashes on his bare skull. "I am a ruined man! a lost man! Why was I born? Mohammed is not the prophet of God. I will sustain this before all the Ulemas in the world."

"What is the matter?" asked his wife, gently.

"Out of my sight, vulture! ghoul!" exclaimed Lefgoim, furiously, at the same time beating her. "It is your fault that I am about to die. You wish to marry again, do you?"

"But, my dear husband," cried Fatima, when his first moment of rage was passed, "explain to me what is the matter."

"The matter, unhappy wretch! In seven days I shall have my head cut off."

Then he got up and took out of a sack seven beans, one for each day he had to live; and towards evening, after having bemoaned his hard fate all day, swallowed one, crying out as he did so,

"There goes one."

Now it happened that at this moment there was passing in the street one of the band of robbers who had pillaged the pasha's treasury. He knew the reputation of the sheikh; and as he said these words in a loud tone, "There goes one," he thought himself recognised, and ran away to tell his associates, who at the news were much alarmed. They held counsel what to do, but could come to no decision. However it was determined that the next evening another of the robbers should go within sight of Sheikh Yateney's house, and judge for himself. He did so just about dark. At his window sat the unfortunate man; and as the robber passed, he swallowed another bean, and exclaimed, "There goes a second." Terrified, conscience-stricken, the thief fled, and repeated what he had heard to his companions. They decided that another should try the third day, and so on until the whole party had tried the experiment. As, however, precisely the same thing occurred during six days, the robbers became so greatly alarmed, that they came in a body to the sheikh, implored mercy, and gave up to him the whole of the treasure

Yateney gravely observed that he knew all along that they were the guilty persons, but that before denouncing them he had resolved to try what conscience would do. Thereupon they swore by the Prophet and the beards of their fathers that they would rob no more; and on this solemn assurance, Sheikh Yateney allowed them to depart. The next day he went before the pasha, told him that he had recovered his treasure, and desired him to send his janissaries for it. The pasha did so, and then gave him a handsome reward. Yateney delighted, went home, told his wife all, and thanked God he had a partner so full of wit as to put such an idea in his head. But he determined to go to the bazaar no more, content to live on the pasha's liberality.

But the destiny of Ben Lefgoim was not fulfilled. His desire for rest could no more be satisfied than that of the dove which went forth from the ark and found nothing but water. There happened at Stamboul (Constantinople) a very grave affair. A treasure placed in the sultan's seraglio was most inexplicably robbed; and the riches being principally diamonds and precious stones, the grief of the monarch was great. The event was rumoured about through all Islam, and the Pasha of Damascus, hearing of the circumstances, sent word to the sultan that there was a man in Cairo who could discover the authors of the robbery. The sultan immediately sent orders that Yateney should be sent under good escort to Stamboul.

Yateney was furious when he heard that he had to go to Constantinople, and for what purpose. He was like a madman, and could express his outraged feelings in no other way than by beating his wife, which he did more severely than the first time. Then, as it was impossible to resist an order of the sultan, he set out for Stamboul, taking with him his wife, and an escort of four janissaries.

As he went along Yateney declared continually that it was all over with him, that he was a ruined man. Arrived in sight of Stamboul his grief grew greater still, and when he landed his heart quite failed him. He accordingly bade the janissaries go forward, and say that he had arrived, but could only reach the palace next day. His object was to gain one day more of life. He then erected his tent on the shore, and remained alone with his wife.

The reputation of the sheikh had spread through all Stamboul, and his arrival had alarmed all the robbers in the place. They trembled lest they all should be discovered. But the real robbers of the seraglio were chiefly frightened. They had been on the eve of embarking with their prize, when they were suddenly prevented. To wait a better opportunity, they had

buried their treasure on the sandy shore; on the very spot Yateney had pitched his tent.

This put an end to all hesitation on the part of the thieves. They rushed to Yateney, threw themselves at his feet, begged his forgiveness, and implored him not to denounce them to the police. Yateney made a similar reply to that he had made to the seven thieves of Cairo, and retired to rest contented and happy. Next day, when the messengers of the sultan came, he exclaimed,

"It is not my place to go to the sultan, but his to come to me. The treasure is here."

The sultan came with all his court. The earth was dug up, and the treasure discovered. But when the vizier asked Yateney who were the authors of the robbery, he answered, "What matter! here is the treasure, the rest is in the hands of God."

The vizier did not insist, and the sultan, ravished at recovering his treasure, loaded Yateney with caresses and presents. He not only rewarded him, but insisted on keeping him about his person. He treated him with distinguished honour as a man of mark and note, loaded him with riches, and put him on an equality with himself. But Yateney was not happy. He did not feel himself equal to his position, and, pestered with questions from all around, sighed for his home and obscurity.

One day he was in a bath with the sultan.

"If," said he, "I were to give the sultan a box on the ear, he would think me mad, and send me back to my own country."

No sooner said than done. Yateney gave the sultan a box on the ear and rushed out of the room. The sultan followed him, burning with rage; scarcely had he crossed the threshold when down went the whole building.

The sultan, persuaded that the sheikh had acted with great presence of mind to save his life, protested that he would grant him any favour he chose to ask him.

"Father of True Believers," said the sheikh, "I only ask one thing, and that is, that you publish through all your dominions strict orders that no one shall ask me any more questions."

Thereupon he told the sultan his whole history, at which the sultan was amazed, and all the more looked upon the sheikh as an inspired man. Then he embraced him, made him great presents, and sent him home to his own country, where ever after he regarded his wife as the author of his fortune, and advised all young men to take example by him, and set great store by matrimonial counsels.

LAYARD AND THE DISCOVERIES AT NIMROUD.

Is it true that the light from some of the more distant fixed stars takes ages multiplied by ages to reach this our earth, and that what we see are not the bodies as they now exist, but as they existed some thousands of years ago? All science is thus carrying us into the past. Geology has made us acquainted with a pre-adamite earth, and various forms of organised being as peculiar to that earlier world. What was considered as nothing more than so much gold-dust scattered on the black ground of the heavens, our modern astronomy has resolved into a field of suns and systems, whose mingled light goes to make up so many splendid constellations, and whose date is to be found far down in the depths of a past eternity. Nor this only. The recent discoveries of the site and ruins of ancient cities, enable us to walk their streets, and leisurely view those palaces in which lived and luxuriated some of the mightiest princes that ever impressed the soil of this our world, the temples in which they worshipped, the tombs in which they were buried, and the monuments which were reared in memory of their deeds and of their name. We find ourselves in the immediate neighbourhood of the hanging gardens, and of those marvellous structures which tradition has referred to a very remote antiquity. Our knowledge is likely to be rectified and

enlarged concerning a people who were supposed to have left behind them no trace of their historical life. These ruins will henceforth testify, not only to the fact of their existence, but to their progress in civilisation, in intellectual culture, in physical science, and in artistic skill. France and England divide the glory of having rescued from the underground darkness and oblivion of twenty-five centuries, some of the most magnificent remains of the old world. Many a traveller's foot had pressed those mounds which are found on the banks of the Tigris, but it was reserved for M. Botta and Dr. Layard to discover the treasures which they concealed. They prosecuted their researches with exhaustless patience and perseverance; and though the story of the people which once inhabited these cities of renown, is to be read in bricks and stones, and slabs, and bas-reliefs, and monumental inscriptions, yet, as Dr. Layard observes, "there could have been no more durable method of preserving the national records; the inscribed walls of palaces and rock tablets have handed down to us the only authentic history of ancient Assyria;" while by the discoveries of himself and others, the intention of those who founded that great empire "will be amply fulfilled, and the records of their might will